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MARGARET AND THE SINGER'S STORY

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MARGARET AND THE SINGER'S STORY.

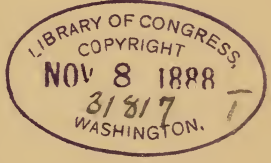
MARGARET

AND

THE SINGER'S STORY

BY

EFFIE DOUGLASS PUTNAM



BOSTON
CUPPLES AND HURD
1888

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TO

MADEMOISELLE RHÉA,

With Love and Admiration,

THE NATURAL OUTGROWTH OF A LONG-TRIED
AND SYMPATHETIC FRIENDSHIP,

These Verses

ARE MOST AFFECTIONATELY

Dedicated.

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MARGARET AND THE SINGER'S STORY.

MARGARET.

HARD by a Berkshire village in the East,
Closed in by hills, and watered by clear springs
And little streams that bubble to a froth
Within the busy mill-wheel's ceaseless turn,
The workers in the quarry all day long
Are blasting marble from the mountain-sides;
And, through the dusky range of towering hills,
The sharp sound of the hammer, and the thud
Of falling stone, are echoing. The men
Are blanched with flying dust, and in the sun
Their powdered garments glisten like the dew
That shines upon the long grass in the dyke.

Here lived and labored, with an honest heart,
One Adrian Rood, of comely mien, and strong;
Proud in his bearing, he was ever kind,
And ever brave and daring to defend.
And all the village knew, respected him;
Bespoke the maiden lucky who should win
His manly heart, his snug possessions too,
The home his father builded at the foot
Of a green hill. Here, when the day's turmoil
Was ended, and the bells pealed forth, and quick
The workmen flung their sledges down, and took
Their weary way across the quiet street;
When the rich glory of the sunset flashed
Against the darkness of the mountain-tops,
And mixed in mellow tints, in purple, gold,
And crimson lights, — unto his sheltered home,
Hid from the sun, and white amidst tall trees,

Thick covered with crisp vines o'er porch and door,
To where his frugal supper lay outspread,
Came Adrian Rood.
Then welcome was the cry
Of the good dame who poured the tea, set out
The steaming dishes savory with plain food,
And gossiped cheerily, — of his day's work;
And was he tired? Did he feel the heat,
She asked, of noonday? Would the nightfall bring
The needed shower? — till the lad had done,
And, dressed in tidy raiment, sauntered out;
While she, her housework over, sat her down
And hummed some simple tune, the loud click-clack
Of needles keeping time; or hung upon
The gate, some neighbor telling, that nowhere
In all the world a better son there was
Than Adrian Rood.
Close to their cottage lived

Laurence the miller, with his wife, their child,
Fair Madge, and her own cousin Margaret,
Their sweet charge. Orphaned now for many a year,
Alone, forsaken, on life's sea adrift,
They took her in; and while she still was one
In kindred with them, yet she thought she was
A burden, made herself a veriest drudge
In compensation for the few bare wants
Which they supplied her. So, when Adrian came
To chat with Laurence in the cool of day,
She, the poor timid maiden, held aloof,
And in all things she gave the preference
To Madge. For she had heard the town-folks say
That he came wooing: 'twas the father's wish,
The mother's too, nor Adrian seemed averse.
For, gayly clothed in holiday attire,
There lived no fairer maiden in the town;
And if she bore herself defiantly,

And tossed her head in consciousness of
charm,
In no way was it strange that Adrian
Rood
Should wish to woo the girl; for well to do
Was Laurence, and his child in time sole
heir
Would prove to comfortable estate. Yet
she,
Poor Margaret, grew to love unwittingly.
They did not know; for in her heart she
locked
Her secret up, and held it there so safe
That e'en her cousin asked if she disliked
Their friend. At which she faltered an
excuse, —
A household duty had called her away,
Or she was ill or tired, any thing
Which likelier should make amends for
her
Withdrawing. But she often fancied still
That Adrian loved her too; she felt his
voice
Was softer when he spoke to her, his
hand
At parting even had a warmer clasp
Than when he bade the other folk good-
night.

And sometimes, as she sat and worked, she knew
His eyes were on her; but she would not look,
Or trust herself to meet inquiring gaze.
For had he not come hither but to see
Her cousin Madge? and he was merely kind
To her, she thought, — ah, humble Margaret! —
Because he pitied her: he'd do as much
For any homeless thing, — a poor lost bird
With broken wing, down fallen from its nest,
He'd stop to soothe. And then she beat her hands,
And quivering in her pain, she cried, "For shame!
For if he loves me, he loves Madge the most."
Some children of the village came one day
And hung about her, praying that she would
Go with them into the neighboring wood
To gather flowers all the afternoon,
And sit beneath the trees and tell them tales,

And eat the luncheon which they had
prepared.
And naught would do but she must go
with them,
Up the steep hills, and through the count-
less paths,
Knee-deep in grass, and fragrant to a
sense
Of sickness with the mandrake bloom ;
and oh
The cries that echoed through the wood !
the gay
Loud laughter of the children at their
play.
The day was fully spent, and joyously,
When sweet a thousand blossoms, far
and near,
Had felt the thrill of Margaret's touch,
and lay
Piled up before her ; and the twilight fell,
And birds on shady boughs had ceased
to sing,
Ere they had left the wood, each one to
take
The gladsome way that led unto her
home.
Then merrily came Margaret with her
flowers,

Great heaps of bluebells, and of violet
plants
And columbine, and tufts of maiden-hair;
But at the turning of the miller's lane
She started, for there stood Adrian
Rood.
And Margaret blushed that he should
find her thus
Bedecked, like a May Queen at festival;
For on her head the girls had weaved a
crown,
And there were strings of daisies round
her waist.
But there he waited, smiling as he
reached
To take the basket from her; and he
cried,
"Nay, Margaret, 'tis too heavy, and your
cheeks
Are flushed with walking. Give it me,
dear Meg,
And I will go with you unto the end
Of this long lane." And Margaret's
foolish heart
Beat violently when at the gate he paused
And hindered her from entering, as he
asked
A flower to keep in memory of this

Their pleasant walk. She trembling plucked a rose,
And shyly gave it him. Without a word
She hurried up the little garden-path;
And half the night she could not sleep, but knelt
Beside her window wondering, and breathed
The heavy fragrance from the lilac-tree,
In momentary joy of that great love
Which Adrian requited as she knew
By every look and word. Next day about
Her uncle's house she moved distractedly,
Scarce saw the frown upon her cousin's brow;
For Madge waxed cold, and never spoke to her,
Or helped her with the work as was her wont,
Till Margaret questioned, fearing she was ill,
And twined her arms around her cousin's neck;
At which Madge shook her off, and stared at her
Indignant, saying, "'Tis a pretty way

You have, oh yes, a very pretty way!
But you may keep it to yourself, your words
And fawning sweetness for Adrian Rood.
I'll none of them. A very traitor's kiss
Is this which you have given." And Margaret
Stood, not knowing what she heard, till the voice
Of Mistress Laurence shrill and loud broke forth
In angered tone. "And so, niece Margaret,
What game is this you play? The beggared child
That I took in and cared for as my own,
You fix a trysting-place to meet the man
Your cousin was to wed, and then come back
And sleep in peace beneath our honest roof.
What recompense is this, deceiving minx?"
Then the pale girl, deep injured, like a queen
Rose up, and looking in their faces, cried
"Nay, aunt, nay, cousin, but you do amiss

To censure like to this without a cause;
For, as I live, I knew not Adrian Rood
Would meet me from the woodland coming home.
In sooth, you know I would not be untrue
To you, to Madge, or still to him who loves
Your daughter." She turned as if to leave them,
But close upon the threshold stood the form
Of Adrian Rood; and Margaret, seeing him,
Crept back, and hid her tearful face within
Her hands. Lo! a deep silence fell, nor broke
Till the brave lad stepped forward; and he spake,
"Forgive me that I heard, unseen, my name,
And heard it wrongfully accused, like that
Poor child, whose honest word you hear shall be
Confirmed by mine. I own that I did meet
The maiden in the lane, yet she nor I
Had fixed the hour or named a trysting-place;

And if we had, what then? I say, what
then?
Since not to any one am I beholden.
But 'tis meet I know the accusation;
For I have come this very night to ask
The girl in marriage, not Madge, but
Margaret."
And not a word said they; nay, not a
sound,
Except the flutter of a night bat's wings
As it flew past the window, could be
heard.
They were perplexed, dumb-stricken
every one,
As Adrian's voice resounded in the room.
"Come, Margaret, your answer: speak it
out!
I cannot dally with fine words, or frame
In pretty speech the love I bear for you;
But I'll be true and tender to the last,
If you will only wed me, Margaret."
"If I could die, if I could only die!"
The poor girl thought, as looking up she
saw
Her cousin weeping; for she knew that
Madge,
In spite of all, had loved the young man
well.

But straightway she went near to where
he stood,
And took his hand, and kissed it as she
said,
"I always knew you had a noble heart,
And much I thank you for the part you
take
In my behalf; but while I honor you
Past all compare, respect, ay, love you
too,
Yet not enough to wed you, Adrian Rood."
Then she dropped down before him in a
swoon.
He raised her up, and tenderly he brushed
The waving hair back from her face, and
sighed
To see her there so still, and white, and
cold;
And turning to the others, in hoarse voice
He bade them look to her, and staggered
out
Into the night, a sad and hopeless man.
Madge clung to Margaret, and she sobbed
aloud,
"Oh, sweet my cousin, I have done you
ill;
But speak to me and say that you for-
give!"

And Margaret faintly answered, "I forgive."
Then ever as before they labored on
About the miller's household as of yore.
Yet never shone the face of Adrian Rood
Upon his neighbor's porch as in old time,
And never in their midst his name was spoke,
For something in the look of Margaret's eye
Forbade it. Yet she smiled again, and went
About her duty uncomplainingly.
But once alone, shut in her silent room,
The burden of her seeming she cast off,
And wept that Adrian should live to think
Himself unloved. She could not see a hope
To cheer her on; and thus a year went by,
And in the heated term the village was
O'ertaken by a plague, a dread disease,
A fever, that so swiftly spread, it swept
Away whole families. And Margaret went

And watched beside the sick, and cared
for them.
And when they chid her for her reckless-
ness
In braving the contagion at its height,
And strove to hold her from the frightful
ill,
She prayed they would but leave her to
her peace;
For if she died there surely was no
loss,
And then no selfish thought could hold
her from
The right of doing good. So through
the rank,
Polluted air of that grim pestilence
She ventured, till herself was stricken
low.
It was at harvest-time; yet the ripe grain
In its full beauty lay untouched. The
sky
In dreamy blue looked down on stinted
growth
Of corn that shimmered in the breath of
hot
Noonday; and ruthlessly the lilies were
Destroyed, dried up amongst the seedy
grass

And weeds in quantity. No reaper's voice
Came joyous from the field, for everywhere
Within the little town there was a sad
Home-coming. Then upon her humble couch
They laid poor Margaret down, and tenderly
Through many weary nights were vigilant.
But ever and anon, without a pause,
Deliriously she called for Adrian Rood;
And they, not willing to refuse her aught,
Were loath to let her die unsatisfied.
So Madge made sacrifice of foolish pride,
And set in search, and found him as he came
At evening from working in the quarry.
He paled a little when he saw the girl
Her doleful message speaking, and he heard
As in a dream that Margaret wished for him.
"Oh, come!" cried Madge; "our cousin lies beyond
All hope of cure. Be noble now as you

Have been. In Heaven's name, forgive!" Said he,
"There's nothing to forgive, but I will go."
Then silently together through the street,
Unto the house, and up the narrow stair,
They entered in the chamber where she tossed,
So thin and worn that Adrian knew her not,
She was so changed. But softly he drew near
And took her hand, a frail and shrunken one,
And pressed his lips upon it. She looked up,
And seeing him she whispered, "You have come,
And it is well; for here upon my heart
Is something which burns me for the keeping."
And when he gently told her not to talk,
She seemed so weak, she smiling answered him,
"Oh, let me speak!" And while the sun's last rays

A halo formed to luminate her face,
She said that she had loved him from the first;
That even when she let him go away
Refused, when he had wished to marry her,
She loved him most. She felt it was her right,
Since now she lay a-dying (so she thought),
To tell him all, since Madge was pledged to wed
A young man of the town at Easter-time.
Then she sank back exhausted; but her eyes
Were fixed on him until the darkness came,
And when the morning broke in rosy light
Above the vine-clad hills, and she awoke,
He still was lingering there with anxious heart.

Though weary weeks went by without a change,
The maiden did not die. She lived to pluck

May blossoms with the children, now her own,
For many happy years; and Adrian's pride
Is his sweet wife, whose name is Margaret.

NOONDAY.

I HEAR a bird, sweet singing near its nest,
And see the sunshine on the water's
breast,

And sit among the grasses tall and high,
That hold their clustered heads up to the
sky.

I see a butterfly on a pale flower,
That droops its head in this bright noon-
day hour.

Not far beyond this meadow-land of green,
'Neath shady trees that sometimes inter-
vene,

A cattle herd stands grazing in content,
In clover pastures, rich with blossoms
spent;

And to the east the beach's whitening
sands,
With quiet sea that leads to distant lands.

Cool, in defiance of the glittering sun,
The little craft sail outward, one by one.

Ah, noon of life! meridian of day!
Would thou were sweet and bright as this
alway!

MY SHIPS.

How many ships have I sailed out to sea,
Bound with fond hopes for undiscovered lands,
Tossing on waves no seaman understands!
Who stops to listen to philosophy?
Who thinks of storm winds, or the power that strands
Our freighted ships on lonely foreign lands,
Or wrecks them — sinks them deep and hopelessly?
O heartless gales! by what foul strategy
Burst thou the grappling of the iron bands
That girt the proud ship that belonged to me?
I stood upon the shore but yesterday,
And waved God-speed to that fair-laden bark;

But all last night, though I did weep and pray,
The sea grew furious, and the sky grew dark.
Rudderless and anchorless, she sank away —
No lighthouse gleaming with a warning spark —
And all my coinèd merchandise to pay
My heart's creditor, was lost in the dark.

AUTUMN.

LEAVES tremble overhead, then underneath,
With silken sound and aromatic breath,
Fall to earth, making bright contrast with all
The slender reeds, the purple thistle-blow,
And darkly tinted grasses in the dike.
Then grow the evenings longer, and the days
Wax short; and, from the burning brush, the smoke
Curls gracefully, like incense in a church.
The best, most glorious temple, gilded far
With a supreme adornment everywhere,
The world, disrobèd of her charms, goes back
To gardens bare, and naked trees, to sleep

'Neath frosty sheen, with just enough of life
To show she does but sleep, and soon will wake
And smile again, so sure the promise given,
Into a sunny springtime ladened fair.

IN VAIN.

I HEARD a bird, with golden wing,
Sing in the poplar-tree.
I longed to catch the quivering thing,
And all its melody.

But soon the feathery songster fled,
And skimmed the meadowy lea;
And all the singing birds he led
Away, away from me.

The sun shone down in golden streams
Upon my cottage floor.
I tried to stay the shining beams,
To keep them evermore.

Straightway the sun sank out of sight,
The shadows gathered thick,
And left me in the dreary night
Alone, sore-hearted, sick.

And once beside the sea I stood,
The moonlight shining down
On white waves in the murm'ring flood,
And seaweeds salt and brown.

And, oh! I cried for joy to see,
Upon the sandy beach,
A pearl of priceless rarity
Within my easy reach.

In hideous mockery, the tide
Came in with ravenous roar;
And now will restless waters hide
The pearl forevermore.

TO MERRET.

LITTLE friend, there is a flower,
  Unsullied by a darksome spot,
Purest that grows in earthly bower,
  Sweetest emblem of holy thought.
Ever looking up towards Heaven,
  Youthful hearts it seems to tell,
Let thy life to truth be given,
  All thou dost shall be done well.
In thy soul, then, dearest Merret,
  Thou must keep it, boldly wear it,
Shining forth in all its brightness,
  Living fresh in snowy whiteness.
Tell me, shall *thine* emblem be
  A lily pure and fair to see?

TO LORETTO.

WHAT though the critics hesitate thy praise,
And on the faces of thy canvas throw
But careless glance; or if in passing raise
Broad hint, dislike to shape or size, or glow
Of color in thy work which speaks the soul,
Lo! 'gainst God's handiwork some mortal cries,
And none alike sees beauty as a whole;
Though be it mote or tear in other eyes,
We know not, but the difference is. O thou
With consecrated life, free given to Art,
Live full thy promise! Let the years endow,
Nor from thy task let faithful soul depart.

SONNETS.

I.

THE buds were bursting from the linden-trees,
And over all the land the sun shone down,
And, flitting through the brushwood thick and brown,
The robins built and sung. The April breeze
The violets moved on their low bended knees.
Hearts thrilled with joy and peace, and love new grown;
And the prolific seed of life was sown
In every nook, in wild, sweet melodies
Along the stream, or 'cross the meadow blown.

"Good-by," he said, and smiled e'en as
he spake ;
And I, so sure of all things best for
him,
Smiled back, and said, "Good-by;" for
his dear sake
I smiled, nor would not let my eyes grow
dim,
Although my soul's best portion was at
stake.

II.

"God loves the good." He proves by
death and pain
The measure of that love, while life is
young,
And all its sweetest music is unsung.
He robs the fields of ripening golden
grain,
And leaves the thistle growing in the
lane.
O gentle Christ, forgive! My soul has
clung
To his soul's garments the long years
among.
Now 'gainst my paling cheeks the tear-
drops rain,
And o'er the midnight not a star is hung

To lead me through the darksome paths
alone.
In vain I strive the misty veil to move,
Which Death between our visages has
thrown;
But even as I pray my strength to prove,
I prostrate fall, face downward — with a
moan.

III.

Life hurries on to May, and silently
The gentle spring grows old, and as I
plod
The wood-paths all alone, the heavy sod
Lies deep above those self-same hands
that I
Did kiss and cling to in that last "good-
by."
Up the steep hill I climb, with feet
unshod,
While he rests happy in the fold of
God.
Surely, dear heart, 'tis not so hard to
die,
As to live on beneath the chastening rod.
O my belovèd! turn to me once more
With that calm light upon thy tender
face,

And with thy love the dull, dark days
bridge o'er,
Which e'en the tomb breaks through in
its embrace,
And rolls the great stone backward from
the door.

EASTER MORNING.

I HAD not marked the season, but to count
Time backward, for my weary heart was sad,
And measured hours by records of deep loss.
So when the chapel chimes rang joyfully,
And made the south wind tremble in a voice
Of common gladsome praise, that seemed to thrill
All living things alike, I asked, "Wherefore
This loud acclaim of bells?" They answered me,
"The Lord is risen!"

As I looked abroad,
The new-ploughed ground smelt freshly from the fields,

And flowers pale, upheaved amidst young grass.
Earth seemed to catch the meaning of the day
In resurrected life. Leaves struggled forth;
And tender buds upon the cherry-tree,
Decked in white robes and fair, braved early death
By a too sudden joy. The eastern light
Fell golden o'er the sea, and kissed the brook
In its long woodland run. The cottage door
Swung open, and I wandered out, and felt
My tired feet sink down in the cool sod.

"Behold!" I thought, "am I alone so sad
I cannot join in this loud hymn of praise
To the new-risen Christ whose empty grave
Is the sweet promise of eternity?
Shall I indeed surrender up to grief,
And think of dear ones in their winding-sheets,

When glory-garmented the Lord comes
forth
And rolls the great stone backward from
the tomb?"

I turned my face toward the distant hills,
Where our belovèd, in his new-made
grave,
Lies 'neath the shadow of their verdant
tops,
And with fresh hope of re-awakened life,
I straightway wept, resigned, and cried,
"Amen!"

I.

THEY ask me, dearest, why I love thee, thou
Whose fortune is so meagre, and whose name
Is ranked among the losers of life's game.
Fond heart, I would that I might tell them how
I read my fate, writ plain upon thy brow,
And felt at thy hand's touch a thrilling flame
Shoot through my being, and the world became
Transfigured all — but this I do avow,
The love that measures out its wealth is tame.
The world is naught, love, were I lost to thee;
The plaudits of the crowd, the laurels wrought
A feverish brilliance that could never free

The weary dimness of my soul, — ah! naught
But desolation would it bring to me.

II.

When I was kneeling 'neath cathedral dome,
And the lights glimmered from the altar's height,
The acolyte and priest in garments white
Chanted the anthems of the Church of Rome,
And prayed aloud amidst the evening gloam.
The lofty organ swelled with glorious sound,
Vibrating sweet with voices from the choir.
I lifted up my eyes and peered around,
And through the smoke of holy incense fire,
They chanced upon thy face with halo crowned.
What if our hands did steal across and meet
In quick, convulsive grasp? God knows, I say,

It is the best way, dear, to thus repeat
Our souls' passionate love-vows when we pray.

III.

Why should my spirit lose its sacred fire
By absence, O my dearest one! from thee?
What though thy face serene I cannot see,
My soul's true faith in thee shall never tire.
That will which ministers to all shall be
To lift us gently from this lowly mire
Of discontent, O love! and bring us higher
Unto each other, life-star, thou and me,
And loose our wild hearts from their cage of wire!
Be young, thou saidst; oh! let our love be young,
Let summer die, and let the autumn come.
Let winter, with his icy mantle flung
On every tender bush and tree, hush dumb
The merry song-birds that so joyous swung
Upon their boughs! O love, my love, be young!

FAREWELL TO RHÉA.

WILL you pause in your fame's fullest glory,
Unrivalled, unexcelled Alcyone?
And hide with swifter movement than we dreamed
The sweet translucent beauties that have gleamed
Full on our souls, and won them each and all,
And let the curtain veil you as a pall,
Too soon dropped down before the vision fair
Of Art's own majesty enthronèd there.
In sooth, the mellowed accents of your voice
Shall ring through darkness, making hearts rejoice,
And eyes that you have gladdened cannot stay

Unmindful of the light they do obey;
For, lady, there shall sparkle near and
far
The reflex brilliance of our favorite star.

MASTER AND POET.

A MASTER stood beside a youth one day,
And bade him write; and marking out the length
And rhythm of his verse, and theme and rhyme,
Drew limits, and made margin to his page,
And spake, "Note, thou: A-weary is the world
Of these sad songs: dejected hopes and fears
Make doleful sound; and if a poet thou
Indeed must be, let beauty's quiet charm
And the sweet scent of flowers breathe thro' thy verse."
Forthwith the youth sang out in praise of birds
And blossoms and of gay young things: he laughed,

He danced, he flung him on the green, he spent
His force in cheering; but the world went by.
One morn, when moved by some strong power in him,
He wrote of love and lovers, and he sighed;
And, plucking from its stem a crimson rose,
He vowed it was a hateful thing, whose thorns
Stung deep; he railed at Fortune, and he moaned
His fate, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!" and wept.
Then was the master's margin overleaped,
And all the page discolored by his tears.
Perplexèd meanings hurried thro' one line
Of that forbidden usage of his gift.
But even as the master frowned on him,
A shout went up, and from its length and breadth
The world acknowledged and proclaimed him great.

TO HORTENSE.

God gives no sweeter gift than which thou hast, —
The power to move the soul and moist the eye,
To gladden and make joyous with thy smile,
More grateful than a glimpse of summer sky.
'Tis not thy name alone is great: thy worth
Looms greater far; and while the laurel wreathes
Thy brow, it does not check the hand that seeks
To render love the only crown life needs.
Queen, artist, friend, and woman above all,
With face Madonna-like, and soul of fire,
Whereat we gather, and are warmed and cheered,

And lifted up to spheres, transfigured
higher.
Let others call thee great, I'll say thou'rt
good,
With prodigal acceptance of the claim
To genius, merit, art, and all things best,
Which God hath granted with thy spot-
less fame.

POST NUBILA JUBILA.

THE silly bird upon the tree-top there
Would loudly sing, altho' his mate were dead;
Would chirp upon the bush whence she had fled,
And hop about, content, nor seem to care,
And pick the brightest berries everywhere.
I've seen a child at play by a death-bed,
Cooing and laughing while the prayers were said.
"Hush it!" they whispered; but I did not dare
To lay my hand across the golden hair,
And crown the first woe on that baby head.
I could not say, "Child, laugh no more, but weep,
And learn what death is ere thou knowest life."
Nay, little one, play on, for grief will creep

Upon thee later in this field of strife,
Thy curls the sunshine will not always keep.

Man is inconstant to his griefs amassed;
Sorrows grown old and fading with the past,
The darkness he hath known, the rain, the wind,
The faith which he hath lost in human kind,
The salt of bitter tears, the tempest blast,
The ships of freighted hopes at random cast,
The tender clasp of hands with his intwined,
Multitudinous aches of heart and mind,
And wreck of happy hours too fair to last
Wax dim within the years he leaves behind.
O bird! O child! O man! weak-hearted, vain,
Behold! ye are alike proportionate
In warmth of constant love and lasting pain;
And even death doth prove subordinate
To that new love which blossoms out again.

AT MIDNIGHT.

While on the hearth the embers die
away,
And the light flickers from the ill-fed
lamp,
And shadows sad among the ashes gray
Move to and fro with noiseless, weary
tramp;

While through the broken pane the tem-
pest sighs,
And my steps falter on unsteady floor,—
Shades of departed joys around me rise,
With one dear face that smiles on me
no more;

With one sweet voice that thrills of trans-
port gave,
Now silent as the grass beneath the
snow,—

As heedless to my heart-cries as the grave
Are all these shadows moving to and fro.

Oh! if 'twere mine, belovèd one, but mine
To feel thy hand within mine own hand steal
Across the waste of youth, that borderline
That marks the awful darkness where I kneel,

I'd die content, with one warm look from thee,
And feel it good to be recalled above,
And soar from earth into eternity,
A victim, dearest, to exceeding love.

TO M. S.

(Written on the fly-leaf of George Eliot's "Spanish Gypsy.")

I WOULD that you might read the Spanish tale
Writ here of poor Fedalma, and drink free
Its vintage sparkling up like fire, nor fail
Again to fill the goblet bounteously.
For there are books (and this is one) we read
And read again, gaining anew each time
Appliances of good whose beauteous seed
Prolific blossoms in supernal rhyme.
Life owns no loftier aim than authorship,
Nor any one a worthier book than this.
Herewith I sign my name, and only dip
Into the ink to add, your friend it is
The giver of the book, — your friend and his,
Don Silva's.

THE SINGER'S STORY.

Oh come with me to Devon by the sea!
Where England's beauty holds a power complete,
Where waters ripple thro' the woods and lea,
Where leafy tongues of bush and tree repeat
The sweetest poem written 'neath the sky,
Of peaceful nature smiling up to God,
Of elm and oak tree growing thick and high,
And tufts of emerald-green that grace the sod.
And thou wilt see the well-kept English lawns,
The sloping hills, and even, smooth-beat roads;
The wide-spread parks, where gentle, meek-eyed fawns

Skip gleefully; the barns, where heavy loads
Of ripened grain the busy harvesters bring
Are stored away; the beds where mignonette
And marigolds and crimson poppies swing
Their drowsy heads; the quiet lanes beset
With star-like blossoms blinking at the sun,
And full of fragrance sweet beyond compare.
We'll go to England, dear, belovèd one,
And rest among the clustered hillocks there.
'Twas there my father closed his weary eyes
In silent sleep of death (my mother said),
For, dear, it happened all before the skies
So dull and gray looked down on me. I dread
To contemplate my mother's bitter pang
In giving life to me, while far away
My father lay, whose funeral bell rang
Mournfully, two months before the day
That I was born. I had two sisters,—Kate
Was the younger, a comely little maid,

Who romped with me, and was my sole playmate
On village green or 'neath the orchard shade;
Then Alice, elder by five years, whose face
Grew pale with longing, as I heard them say,
For one who held within her heart a place
Too high for idols that are made of clay.
And she lies dead in England, loving heart,
Too tender for the biting, wintry frosts
Of this hard work-day world. Her life's best part
Was brief, like love itself. (We know the costs
Of life, we souls that love.) God gave her rest;
Death folded up the slender hands that lie
Serenely crossed upon her maiden breast,
Deep hidden from the reach of mortal eye.
One bright June morn we left the English coast, —
My mother, Kate, and I, — away to sail
From old familiar haunts that proudly boast
The wealth of centuries.
"My Kate is pale:
A change of air may bring the roses back.

My boy is ill," my patient mother said.
"We'll cross the ocean, tho' our heart-
strings crack
To leave behind us England and our
dead."
I well remember when we landed here.
The bustle of the people hastening by
Filled me with terror, and full many a
tear
Coursed down my cheeks. "Ah, well-a-
day!" thought I,
"'Tis not so fair as Devon; I love it
not!"
And, clinging wildly to my mother's knee,
I sighed for home, and vainly, vainly
sought
To scan the sea that lay 'twixt it and me.
Here on these shores began the gloomy
days
And nights, with storm-winds whistling
shrill and loud;
Our mother toiling, but in fruitless ways,
To drive away the hungry wolves that
crowd
Against the door of that poor, helpless
soul,
Who, coming friendless unto foreign
lands,

Looks upon death, and hears the burial toll
Of all her happiness, and hopeless stands
Despairing. So went by the summer days,
Till regal Autumn and her courtiers came
To steep the land with crimson dyes ablaze,
Alike on bush and tree and ground the same.
I cannot tell thee when I learned to sing.
'Twas ere I knew the meaning of the words
I scarce could speak, sweet tones re-echoing
Untutored, like the golden-wingèd birds.
"Marvellous!" they cried, who listened unto me.
'Twas strange, they said, so young, so frail a form,
So small a throat, could hold such melody.
These were our neighbors, who, thro' evenings warm,
Would sit outside to listen to my song,
And with their plaudits generous and loud
Would startle me, while, clambering along

The window-sill, the little ones would crowd.
When times grew worse with us, in hopefulness
I struggled as I could in humble ways
To help my mother out of her distress
By little songs and merry roundelays,
That I would softly steal away to sing
In crowded street or busy market-place;
Glad to the very soul of me to bring
An end to hunger and its chill embrace.
One morn, beside the open window singing,
Half to myself, a quaint old English song,
I watched the sunshine in the East upspringing,
And flocks of birds that southward flew along;
And as I sat there, with my sad eyes straining
Out to the sky beyond the yellow trees,
My voice commingled with the low complaining
Of dying summer borne upon the breeze.
No ears for muffled footsteps on the walk
Beneath my open window near the street,

Nor eyes for finger silencing the talk
Of passers-by.
How many paths are beat
To narrow ways that lead to daily work!
I lay my hand upon my heart and think,
O God, my God! of all the ills that lurk
To drag souls downward to a sinful brink.
Just then upon the window-sill a hand
Touched mine, and rays of sunshine lumined bright
On kind Roberto's face. (I understand
The meaning of a messenger of light.)
"Have the birds, my little one, been teaching thee,"
He said, "some fragment of their tenderest song?
Where hast thou learned to quote so perfectly
The language of that gayly-feathered throng?
Thou hast been stealing from the nightingale,
That sings the night thro' on the rose-bush tree,
Some tender ditty or some lovelorn tale.
Sweet bird, sweet bird, I prithee answer me."
"I never had a teacher, sir," said I,

"Not even 'mongst the birds, nor ever heard
The nightingales in melody soar high,
Nor pilfered from the rights of man or bird, —
Not I; tho' I have watched birds on the wing,
And sighed for just their power to fly some day
So very far from every living thing,
My life is dreary, and heaven's *so* far away!"
Then moved by something in his face and way,
And kindly speech: "Roberto is a friend,"
Thought I, "to trust, and unto him I'll pray
To bring this weary conflict to an end:
The angels hear no longer what I say."

I joined Roberto on the street outside;
He led me thro' the crowded thoroughfare,
And paused before a house whose portal wide
Flew open as he knocked and entered there.

There sat a man, a book upon his knee,
With face refined and full of sympathy,
Turning the printed pages leisurely.
Roberto entered hand in hand with me.
Then from the crimson cushions of his chair
The stranger rose and spake, "Whom have we here?"
And stroked his hand across my sunny hair,
And smiled on him with warmth who brought me there.
"Good Florio," Roberto answered, "he,
This skylark, 'cross my path this morning fell,
And I have brought him as a gift to thee,
A youthful Jenni for thy 'Guillaume Tell.'"
I think that God must love me truly, dear,
To send into my life his angels blest,
Who unconditionally have clasped me near,
And held me. What surer, holier test
Of godly love than this? The warm sunshine
And the pale moonlight come to each and all;

Crush but the purple grape, thou'lt have
the wine;
And, if thou'lt shake the tree, ripe fruit
will fall.
But friendship that is perfect and serene
Thro' heat, thro' cold, that ever constant
flows
Thro' every avenue of life between
Some heart and thine; that feels and sees
and knows
The border-line of all thy joy, thy grief,—
Comes *that* to all? Nay, nay, I say to
thee,
Unless 'tis nurtured on a firm belief
Of mutual merit and sincerity,
As well take chaff and call it golden
wheat,
Or sit beneath a lamp and call it sun,
Or drink a cup of gall and say 'tis sweet,
As think that friendship otherwise is won.
Now Florio was master of the art
That nature wed him to; musician, too,
At princely courts he had been from the
start;
Was versed in lyrics, and could thrill thee
thro',
Kindle thy heart by his empyrean fire,
By magic fingering of the ivory keys,

Make bold within thee every pure desire,
And set thee bended on devoutest knees
Among fair angels chanting, rising higher.

And Florio loved me, and I grew beneath
The tenderest of care; the world was bright
Within the radius of his smile. A wreath
I formed of all his gifts, whose infinite,
Sweet charm I wore within my soul. Ah me!
He loved me for love's sake, as pure hearts do,
Nor strove to look beneath the mask to see
My worthiness: he felt my life was true.
He bade my young, aspiring soul to fix
Its shadowy throne upon a hill of song
So high, to go in search for it should mix
In its wild flight with all the birds in throng
That build their nests upon the rocky edge,
Defy the avalanche, the wind, the storms,
Mock at the robins on the garden hedge,
That live on berries and dig down for worms.

Then from the world my countenance I turned,
And every day and night my efforts bent
To those Olympian heights where life was burned
In sacrificial offering innocent,
Slave to that grim, exacting usurer, Fame,
Whose coin, tho' heaped up to the overflow
Of all the world, were recompense too tame
For losing all the sweets that lie below.
What followed next the chroniclers have told:
The youthful songster, marvel of the age,
Turned all his silvery warbling into gold,
And won a place upon the lyric stage.
Vain pomp and mimicry of life, set out
Before the people to applaud, with things
And baubles to attract the eye, and flout
Upon the boards in garb of Eastern kings.
Thus did I live, and was contented well,
Since Florio willed it so; gained triumphs rare,
And adulations, that as bubbles fell
And bounded from my heart into the air.
Roberto died. Good Florio, grown old,

Unto a quiet home 'midst books and songs
Repaired with honor; but ne'er lost his hold
Upon my heart, that even 'midst the wrongs
Of all the busy life which broadened out
For me, grew stronger, helping me to find
A place high up in art, and hear the shout,
"Bravissimo!" proclaimed. Ah! Fate was kind
To mother and to Kate, and still to me,
To lead them back again to home and friends,
And graves where sleep their kindred o'er the sea,
Where peace abides and happiness attends.
Thus I lived on contented till *thine* eyes
Met mine, gleamed full on me, and lifted up
My soul to heaven with all its mysteries
Quaffed thro' the bounty of love's chalice cup.
The first time that I saw thee, dearest love,
It was in May. I even note the hour,

When thou did'st pass my vision like the dove
White-winged, that bore the olive-branch of power,
Of promissory haven, green fields of thyme,
Fresh with the fairest flowers that e'er grew
Untrammelled by the foot of man. The clime
Was sweeter for thy smile, my own, my true.

Then the next time, beneath cathedral dome
I knelt with thee, thy saintly head bent low,
In prayerful attitude thy hands; the gloam
Of summer evening falling as to show
Thy form against the sombre stone-church wall.
The painted angels on the ceiling high
Seemed trembling, breathing with the rise and fall
Of the great organ's richest harmony.
Silent was I to catch the holy prayer
Passing the threshold of thy sweet young lips,

And every sigh that left thee kneeling
there
Was sunk into my heart like weary ships
O'er-freighted, that find rest on land at
last,
Mid coral forests tinged with rosy glow,
So deeply sunk, so moored, so anchored
fast,
They cannot rise again, they're laid so low.

It all comes back, — the peaceful atmos-
phere,
And all the feverish heat of after-days;
The whirlpool's fury wrecking hope and
cheer
And life's supremest joy, half lost in haze.
"I am a poor Bohemian at the best,"
Said I, "tossed here to-day, to-morrow
there;
My life is one of turmoil, care, unrest,
Keen disappointment grappling every-
where.
But wilt thou think of me, and let thy voice
Reach o'er the darkness of the troubled
sea
Of doubt, despair, and let thy soul rejoice
With mine, which wholly shall belong to
thee?"

One glorious moment heart to heart we stood,
And then we parted. 'Twas a piteous fate
To say adieu to heaven, whose portals should
Shut me from joy and leave me desolate.
Is love, fond heart, then, a forbidden fruit,
That, tasting of its sweetness, one must be
Forth driven from the light, like hunted brute,
And made to eat the dust? O misery!
Accused, condemned: it was a sin, indeed,
To dare to love their child, thy people said.
They drew thee from my side as if a weed
Of poisonous growth had started up instead
Of flowers. "She must have roses for her path,"
They said. "Those tender feet have never trod
The lowly sands of earth." They in their wrath
Forgot the sharp thorn-daggers, and that sod
Is cooling to the feet.

"Accuse me not,"
Thy letter spake, "for I do love thee, dear,
As fond as heart *can* love; but I am caught
And held upon this rack. Nay, do not fear
To trust me thro' the long and weary years
That needs must pass ere we again shall meet.
Farewell! God wills it so. No woman's tears
Fall bitterer down than these upon this sheet.
One burning drop the very paper sears."

I kissed the tear-stains on thy letter's page,
And cried, "Now help me, Heaven! tho' I do stand
Forbidden, I'll burst the wires of the cage
That holds my love: that right is my command.
Come, lion strength, and fill my earnest soul
To bear the burden of her people's curse;
Let lightnings flash, and let the thunders roll;

To live apart from my true love 'twere
worse.
Thou knowest always there's a waking,
dear,
From every dream; and, if the dream be
sad,
We laugh, and say, "Oh, foolish, mis-
spent tear!"
And clap our hands, and cry, "How glad,
how glad
I am 'tis but a dream!" But if the dream
Be sweet, and we awaken in the night
From visions that are brighter than the
gleam
Of seraph wings bleached white within
the sight
Of God, we wring our hands and moan,
"Ah me!
That I might sleep again, and die while
dreaming."
Then gaze without the window-pane to see
If morning on the hill-top may be gleam-
ing.
So I have wakened from a gloomy night
To find a glorious day, and even thee
Beside my very hearth, where sparkle
bright
The fires of peace and joy and liberty.

For thou art free, yea, free as air to love
me:
I read the truth writ plain upon men's
faces
As I go on; I hear it whisperingly
Repeated by the summer breeze. It places
On the pinnacle of life (the singer's life),
A crown so fair that kings might cry aloud
For envy of the gift. O faithful wife!
I am so proud of thee, dear heart, so
proud!
Is this the end? say'st thou, is this the
end?
As if a glimpse of heaven could satisfy
My soul. Nay, nay, my best, my truest
friend,
Unless thy blue eyes falsely testify,
There is no end; unless our solemn oath
Turn recreant, the book begun shall be
Continued ever. May God bless us both!
Thee first and always, and forever me.
I sing my songs for thee henceforth, till
death.
My heart is thine, command it at thy will,
And like a harp in soft Æolian breath
'Twill tremble, vibrate, echo — or grow
still.

TRANSPLANTED.

Of all time in the year to die, the hardest
is in June,
When earth and air and babbling brook
are full of gladsome tune;
When Nature knows no discontent, and
grass grows thick and high,
And lilies look like chalice-cups uplifted
to the sky.

"I would not die in June," so ran the
poet's tuneful words,
That fluttered in my heart of hearts like
wings of prisoned birds.
Yet when she died, she that we loved,
whose life was crossing noon,
'Twas only by the roses that we knew the
month was June.

A heaped-up mass of living flowers be-
spoke it with their breath,

For in our hearts 'twas winter with the
anguish of this death.
I said, "She is asleep," as she wearily
turned her head;
But soon they drew me from the room,
and whispered, "She is dead!"

And though the sun shines out to-day,
and flowers bloom just the same,
It seems as if a fierce north wind, with
selfish, separate claim,
Had stol'n the sweetness from the flower,
the warmth from out the sun,
Had turned the day into the night, with
sorrow overrun.

With tapers burning in the dark to point
me to the pall
That covers every earthly joy, and every
hope, and all. —
If I could follow close behind in that dear
mother's flight,
'Twould lead me into Paradise, thro'
darkness into light.
Sometimes I think God showed his love
to call her just at noon,
Transplanted from a month of flowers to
everlasting June.

THE CHANCEL WINDOW.

TO E. G. W.

PEACE reigned supreme upon the quiet shore;
The setting sun burst thro' the widening rifts
Of cloud, and, with great streams like melting ore,
Dropped down into a crimson sea; the cliffs,
The rocks, the hanging crags, gleamed in its light,
And, sinking low, its last reflected ray
Caught at the world and gilded it as bright,
As jewelled pavements shining on the way
To heaven. Lo! Nature seemed to pause between

Sunshine and shadow with a beauteous
smile;
And I, but loath to miss the lovely scene,
Walked forth alone, my idle time to while.
Where did I go? Alas! I could not say.
But seeing far upon a grassy slope
A house of God, I cried, "O happy day,
Farewell! I'll hie me there, but not a
hope
Have I thou wilt await me. Fare thee
well!"
Thence, hastened by my anxious heart's
desire,
I reached the summit ere the twilight
fell
On that green hillside, where the chapel
spire
Rose up majestical. A little shrine
Built up by loving hands, it did appear
Amid the gloom of trees a holy sign,
Memorial to friend, a lost one dear.
I entered softly, but the oaken door
On noisy hinges swung, and, closing, sent
Loud hollow sound that echoed o'er and
o'er,
As straightway up the middle aisle I went.
With aweful feeling and with reverent
pace,

I soon drew near the chancel window, where
A painted picture of rare Christian grace
Looked down in beauty and in silent prayer.
Faintly the light stole thro' the colored glass
To tell the story. It was made to show
A glimpse of sky and stretch of meadow-grass,
Whereon a mendicant was bending low,
And Christ the gentle, with a finger placed
On his closed eyelids, bade him rise and see.
And as I looked on those bold figures traced,
Behold! they seemed to breathe and living be,
My friend and Master.
Lord, we all are blind!
Our poverty is blindness, and we grope
Our dreary lives out in the dark to find
The great blind Healer. We do pray, we hope,
We are so poor in sight, our human woe
Calls out to him in passing, "Let us see!
Our way from day to day we do not know,

How can we climb the path which leads
to thee?"
And as I spake, the evening drawing near,
The window but a dull mosaic grew;
No form, no shade, no light, no atmos-
phere,
No fair Christ standing 'gainst a sky of
blue.
"How blind we are!" I cried again,—
"how blind!"
We stumble in the blackness of the night,
Our feeble hands reach forth, we strive
to find
Thee, Lord, oh, thee! Give back our
failing sight."
Then thro' the hallowed place there came
a sound,—
The sexton's heavy footfall on the floor,
As he with agèd form made nightly round
To shut the casement, bar the creaking
door.

THE TALISMAN.

"Go, find a four-leaved clover, dear,"
Said Martha unto me:
"It is a sort of talisman;
'Twill bring good luck to thee."

I had been weary all the day;
Old Martha saw it, too,
And led me to the meadow-land, —
Old Martha kind and true.

Among the grassy festoons there,
Soft swaying in the wind,
Long we sought the four-leaved clover,
The talisman to find.

The lady-bug swings lazily
Upon its tender leaves,
The clover tufts are rich and full,
The air with perfume breathes.

The larks bring hither broods of young
From the sun's rays to screen:
'Tis cool beneath the clover-leaves,
Moist, velvety, and green.

We crossed the meadow back and forth,
Our search had been in vain.
When (thanks unto our patron saint)
We wandered back again,

I found one branch of clover bloom
With four leaves spreading wide;
I clapped my hands, and Martha said
I laughed until I cried.

"O Martha! will it make me rich?
And will it make life flow
With Fortune's dearest favors all
That never change nor go?"

Old Martha pressed me to her heart,
Some tears were in her eyes.
(In youth I think her eyes were blue,—
The color of the skies.)

"I know one only talisman
To help us on our way:
'Tis purity of soul," said she,
"God give thee that, I pray.

"Do thy duty, and never fear,
Good luck will on thee beam;
Life's not a fragrant clover mead,
Nor still a fair young dream.

"Ofttimes it is a desert waste,
This dreary life of ours;
But seed is sown in every heart,
Choice fruit and scented flowers.

"And yet we let them wither up,
Our paths grow thick with weeds,
The chilly winds break down their stems,
The insect on them feeds.

"Then to our neighbor's fields we go,
As you and I this day,
To search for sweeter blossoms there,
Our own we fling away.

"My little love," old Martha spake,
"Thy talisman should be
An unremitting, cheerful toil,
A conscience chaste and free."

'Tis many years since Martha went
Over the fields with me
To gather the four-leaved clovers
That we might chance to see.

And I have found it true indeed,
The lesson that she told;
And, as the summer days go by,
I hear it as of old: —

"If thou wilt have a talisman,
Lift up thine eyes to God,
And let the four-leaved clover lie
To blossom on the sod."

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

SAY, was it thou, or was it wholly I,
Sent the first arrow with a poisoned sting?
Shall we not prove it till the day we die
Who robbed the nest, or wounded in the wing, —
Wounded the white dove with its olive gift,
Sweet promise of fair lands of sun and flower.
Who cut the rope and sent the boat adrift
To fight the hard sea-waves at midnight hour?

We should have waited till a fuller growth
Of time, of wisdom, and a gentler sight
And feeling for each other, had made both
Worthy to love and to be loved. We might
Have moored together in a quiet sea,

Or roamed the whole world thro' at even
pace,
But that a moment's anger grew to be
The ruthless, stern usurper of Love's
place.

I cannot blame thee now in looking back,
For youth is hot, and bandies with the
cares
It doth not know; aims high, and doth
not lack
For weapons to strike deep, nor nets, nor
snares
To catch wild birds afloat on quivering
wing.
Or tame them in a cage, or wound, or kill,
It doth not matter, so the helpless thing
Serves a mad purpose or a tyrant will.

If I could wander back into the fields,
And meet thee in the old place once
again,
And cull fresh flowers that the green-
wood yields
Amidst tall grass bent down by summer
rain;
If I could see thee here, or there, or
where

Thou art, bound with light step, or smiling stand
Just as we parted, with an equal share
Of love made manifest in heart and hand,

We might retrace the vision of our youth,
And note the hour its beacon-light went out,
Or, re-awakening to the voice of truth,
Tear from its root all soul-devouring doubt.
We sinned, were sinned against. Confess the wrong,
'Tis half forgiven. There would be less despair
To meet halfway, or, fighting brave and strong,
End pride's most dreary conflict then and there.

HEREAFTER.

I ASK myself, shall Death not compensate
For all the scars of sorrow and the weight
Of all the heaped-up bitterness of fate,
And lift us into heaven inviolate?

We cannot carry thro' this world of dust
A robe immaculate, as an angel must
Who stands before the throne of heaven-
ly trust,
Is purified and safe from moth and rust.

It cannot be that thorns will upward
spring
In after-life, with poison-darts to sting
Young souls, from whose wild anguish
there shall ring
A cry that echoes back no answering.

ONLY GLAD.

WHY should these tear-drops to my eyelids start
If thou art happy, as they say thou art?
For all the rapture of the love I miss,
I would not have it otherwise than this.

The ring of promise that to me was sent
I send thee back again, bedimmed and bent.
I told thee to forget: thou hast obeyed.
How could I hope the past might never fade?

I'm not the only one in pain and grief:
There's many a heart, like an autumn leaf,
Has dropped in silence by the lone roadside,
And starved there in the bitter night, and died.

Then go thy way! I'll never speak thy
name,
Nor question thee, nor hate, nor even
blame.
What am I saying? Nay, I am not sad:
I'm glad thou art happy — only glad.

BEQUESTS.

I LOOK on books piled up with goodly
store
Of manuscript, and treasured thoughts
that rage
With memories of one who never more
Shall guide a pen across the virgin page,

Or leave again the print of burning soul,
Made manifest in poem, song, and wail;
For in his nature's music mixed the whole
Of perfect melody, — the calm and gale.

I look on pictures ranging on the wall
Of this the empty temple of his love, —
Mother and Child, Franciscan in his stall,
And a repenting Magdalene above.

I count the friends he won for me afar,
In living clasp of whose fair, tender
hands

He speaks again, and, like a guiding star,
Lights my faint heart beyond the desert's sands.

I look with eyes turned inward on the gift,
Which e'en his gracious bounty left to me,
Of a firm trust that from the dust shall lift
Two souls into an endless unity;

Of strength to crush the pain of lesser woes,
And kneel resigned beside his early tomb;
For consummation of his life bestows
On him a place where angels have made room.

And this best legacy of all doth tend,
Like odorous air diffusèd with the glow
Of that pure faith I daily apprehend,
To sweeten all this human life below.

GROPING.

(Affectionately to my father.)

When the first warmth of spring-time
came and drove
The frost away, and in its place sprang
buds
Of crocus-plant, bright-hued and hardy
grown,
'Neath heaps of withered leaves; when
on the slope
Of mountain the wild arbutus spread wide
Its waxen petals, and then trailed to
points
Of dizzy height and giant crests of rock;
And creeping things of insect-life came
out
Of hiding, and the children in the copse
Plucked May-bloom, and the world grew
beautiful;

And when I first beheld re-animate
The face of Nature smiling, — my dull sense
Quickened, and I said, "Now I shall reap rich,
Plenteous store of goodly things, ripe thoughts
For books, and, by the waters lingering,
Learn from their own low murmuring new songs.
I shall go forth and cull the fairest flower
To live in picture, and at earliest dawn
Gather fresh leaves of bay-tree wet with dew,
Wherewith to shade my forehead from the sun."
Now the sweet breath of rosy morns was spent,
And the mild heat of glorious afternoons,
And quick the berries ripened in the wood,
And ruddy apples with their heaviest weight
Bent their full branches low; but still I stood
Just where the spring-time found me, listlessly.
I had not writ the poem, nor had I giv'n

Unto the world deep thoughts by nature
stirred.
The song and picture, visionary still,
Groped for expression; and I dreamed
in vain,
But ever and unceasingly built hopes
Upon the morrow, till the summer died.
Then with a tear born of regret and sighs
And lamentations for the bright hours
spent,
I smote the strings which long had silent
lain,
And heard them vibrate with significance.
Thus spake my soul out fully into
rhyme,
Sad like the moaning of autumnal breeze,
Perplexèd strains and minor cadence
mixed
With bird-notes dying in the changing
wood.
What wouldst thou then, O vain, O foolish
heart?
Spin out the summer sunshine into thread
Of gold to wrap thy poet fancies all
To live fore'er untarnished? 'Tis not
just
The laurel should be plucked for him
who sits

Within a garden fair and sings all day,
Who basks beneath the favor of his kind,
Who scarcely looks aside his flowered path,
And strikes the lute-strings with a lazy hand.
For Poetry is born of sacred light
Straightway from heaven, thro' the innermost soul
Of love, loss, suffering, with power to *feel;*
And better for its growth the humblest life,
With *love* alone, than tropic sweetness, palms,
And languorous air; for poets need full time
For resting in the shadow, like the plants,
Of seasons dull.
Behold! upon the ground
A chrysalid from which a butterfly
On golden wing bursts forth to woo the flower:
So shall *he* soar whose soul's sufficiencies
Shall sparkle thro' their covering of clay.

MY HARP.

On polished floor it stands, a harp of gold,
Of dainty carving, and of graceful mould,
Strung with its chords of silver, red, and blue,
Tuned to high key, melodious and true.

I speak to it, and, as a faithful friend
Which hath no interest, nor selfish end,
It answereth. Ah me, the lovely tone!
It is the sweetest voice that I have known.

I pass my hands along the silent strings,
And soft the sad, the melancholy things
Wake at the touch; with very life they sigh,
Like forest leaflets when the wind is high.

But hark! there was a sharp, discordant
sound;
And look thou! on the floor, curled round
and round,
A broken string doth lie. O mortal bliss!
In thee perfection lives no more than
this.

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